

Minnesota Anglers & Tourism Officials Raise Health & Economic Concerns

Washington, DC – Concerned about Minnesota's ecosystems, Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) has co-sponsored the non-native Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act (H.R.6311), which seeks to establish a risk assessment system to prevent the importation of non-native species that are likely to cause health, economic or environmental damage.

The legislation will implement a process to scientifically assess the risk of each foreign species that individuals want to bring into the United States, even if it is not on the existing “Black List” of prohibited species. Those deemed a high risk would be explicitly banned and wildlife that has not been properly vetted would not be allowed in the country until a risk-assessment has been completed. The Asian Carp, which is causing damage to our region’s ecosystem and economy, is an example of the kind of species that would have been barred from import under the provisions of this legislation.

“Non-regulated exotic species pose a threat to Minnesota’s ecological systems and dependent economic interests,” said Congresswoman McCollum, an original co-sponsor of the legislation. “Sportsmen, anglers and hunters, along with tourism businesses have called on Congress to protect our lakes, rivers, forests and habitat from destructive invasive species. This bill is an important first step.”

Invasive species do not only harm the environment, there is also a significant economic cost to the tourism industry and commercial and sport fishing. The infestation of these species can deter consumers, cause financial losses and slow industry growth. The additional costs to control and neutralize the spread of these creatures can also burden local municipalities. When alien species enter an ecosystem they can cause damage by competing with native species for food, introducing diseases, degrading habitat or direct predation.

“The health of Minnesotans and our states’ great outdoors are at risk and we need immediate action. I commend State Representative Rick Hansen and the Minnesota House of Representatives for their leadership on this issue,” McCollum added.

Since 2005, Minnesota State Representative Rick Hansen has proposed various legislative

measures to guard against the spread of invasive species in the state. However, the US does not currently take action to ban wildlife that has been brought into the country, but is not in the federal database, unless significant damage or harm is reported. As a result, potentially unsafe species can be easily and legally imported.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the Oversight and Government Reform Committee.